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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, September 15, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "CANNED CHICKEN". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If any of the plump hens in your poultry flock are not laying enough eggs to earn their feed and roost--I have some suggestions today that may interest you. If you have a steam pressure canner-you might put up some of those hens for good chicken dinners next winter.

For--according to the canning experts--plump young hens--about two years old or a little older, make the best canning material of all the chickens. Younger birds aren't so suitable for canning--because with the long processing that's needed to sterilize the meat--the tender young chicken gets overcooked--loses flavor and develops a stringy texture.

So for canning plump hens--here are my suggestions. But first to give credit where credit is due--let me say that the whys and wherefores of chicken canning that I'm passing on to you came to me, in turn, from the Federal Bureau of Home Economics.

They say--as I mentioned in the beginning--to put up chicken by canning only if you have--or can get hold of--a steam pressure canner. That's important. For only with a steam pressure canner can you maintain a temperature above boiling inside of a can or a jar. And that's the heat you must have to kill the bacteria that may cause dangerous food poisoning.

That's the reason also that it is not safe to can chicken in a water bath--or in a steamer without pressure--or in the oven. For in none of these does the temperature ever get above boiling.

"Dressing a chicken for canning is the same as dressing a chicken to cook for dinner. You take out the lungs--the kidneys--and the eggs--just as you do ordinarily. And you're careful not to make the meat unfit for canning by breaking the gall bladder. Then you cut the hens up into the usual-sized serving pieces.

"After dressing the chicken--the next step in getting it ready to can is to divide the pieces into three piles--the meaty pieces--the bony pieces--and the giblets.

"The meaty pieces--which you can whole--are the breasts--the thighs--the legs--and the upper wing joints. The bony pieces--which you use for making the canning broth--are the backs--the wings--the neck--and the feet if you skin and use them. The giblets are canned separately, because they have such distinctive flavor and color.

"All excess fat should be trimmed off chicken. As for removing the skin--you may do that or not--it doesn't matter in the canning. And you may can the bones or not as you wish.

"Usually, though, it's better to can the bones. For meat canned with the bones in has a better flavor. And it makes a difference in the time you must process the jars or cans in the steam pressure canner. Meat with the bones left in will not need to be processed so long.

"For example, a pint of chicken with the bones in--if it's canned in a glass jar and processed at 15 pounds pressure--needs 65 minutes of processing. A pint of chicken without bones needs 85 minutes. That 20 minutes of time is saved in the first case because the bones help to conduct the heat into the chicken."

So much for the preliminaries--the sorting and the trimming. The next thing to do is to put the bony pieces on to make broth--and to precook the meaty pieces that you're going to pack into the jars or the cans.

"To make broth for the canning liquid--cover the bony pieces with cold water --that's been lightly salted. Let this simmer until the meat is tender. Then you may use the broth as it is for the canning liquid. Or, if you like a thickened broth, you may add granulated gelatin--5 tablespoons to a quart of the broth. Simply moisten the gelatin with some cold liquid--then add it to the hot broth."

And in the meantime--while the bony pieces are being made into broth--the meaty pieces should be precooking.

"The best way to precook chicken to be packed in glass jars is to spread the pieces of chicken on a rack in an uncovered pan and to heat them in a moderate oven until the red color of the raw meat is practically gone next to the bones.

"The second best way to precook chicken is to parboil it in water for 8 to 10 minutes.

"Or if you're canning chicken in tin cans you may want to precook it right in the cans, in a bath of boiling water that comes up to within 1-1/2 to 2 inches of the top of the open cans."

And here's a word of warning about precooking chicken. Never fry chicken before canning it. For when you take it out of the container it won't be that crisp, delicious chicken that it was when you put it in. It'll be hard and dry--and have a disagreeable flavor after it's stored a little while.

Another thing that makes for success in chicken canning is using the right size of containers--the smaller ones. Of the glass jars--the pints are best. Of the tin cans--the number 2 and number 2-1/2 tin cans. And here again the reason is the processing time. Chicken canned in larger jars has to have such heavy processing that you can't get a product that makes the best eating.

And speaking of processing time--that's one of the most important points of all. You must have the right time for the size of the container you're using--for the type of container--and for the way you're putting up the chicken.

But since these processing times are so important and so hard to remember, I'll not go into them now. Instead, I'll refer you to a publication of the U. S. Department of Agriculture that gives you a timetable--as well as other helpful chicken canning pointers.

The title of the bulletin is "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats". The number is Farmers' Bulletin 1762. And you may get it by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. There is no charge for the bulletin.